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Regional Urban  
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## Fair Employment Practices

Mr. Chairman, fellow Urban Leaguers, and friends:

I consider my assignment today, one of the greatest importance; yet, one that can stimulate a great deal of frustration and discouragement. My assignment is to discuss Fair Employment Practices - a matter we have all heard about, talked about, and ardently worked for.

However, ours is the job of not despairing when the going gets tough. It's the job of not merely coming in for the "kill"; but, rather one of initiating, continuing, and concluding strategy and efforts toward the solution of problems confronting us.

This must be borne in mind as we review the plight of national legislation for a permanent Fair Employment Practice. The F.E.P.C. set up by Executive Order of the late President Roosevelt has been "operated on" to reduce its pulse rate; and frankly, to slowly put its heart to eternal rest. Only 42% of the budget needed by the F.E.P.C., was appropriated. Furthermore, it has operated largely in relation to war industries; and there has been the need for President Truman to strengthen the little life left in the Committee, by basing its authority and jurisdiction on interstate commerce, or some other broad platform.

Personnel of the national F.E.P.C. has had to be drastically decreased. Such resignations as that of G. James Fleming in Philadelphia, represent the insecurity we know to exist among what personnel that is left.

What does this mean to us? Where should it point our attention? A representative of Ann Arnold Hedgesman, speaking to a C.I.O. Conference in Trenton two weeks ago pleaded that organizations keep up pressure on state representatives in Congress. This must be done. How many local Leagues have written an official letter to their legislators? Do our policies prevent this? How many staff members have written personal letters, and caused hundreds of other persons and organizations to write?

Or, is it enough to write letters? How many League representatives have had a personal conference with the representatives from their state to our national congress? What policies restrain us from such action? To what extent do we keep ourselves up-to-date on the behind-the-scenes deals attempted in Congress about legislation vitally affecting our welfare? Does this have to mean that we are a political pressure group? And, if so, are we not good enough as professional social workers to be able to show what social work includes and must attend to?

How much genuine interpretation on the question of fair employment legislation, do we give industrialists? Have we ever developed any channel (of influence) to reach the National Association of Manufacturers and other Management Associations, in order to create as more favorable climate for efforts towards such legislation?

Today the national picture is by no means encouraging. Congresswoman Mary Norton (of New Jersey), sponsor of H.R. 2232 and chairman of the House Labor Committee, is attempting, with a steering committee recently organized, to use Calendar Wednesday to get this F.E.P.C. bill on the floor. She needs your support. More than that, Representatives from our States should be in the House on Wednesday to vote this bill on to the floor. This is the third device attempted, and we need to help make it work.

On the state level, many bills were introduced for permanent Fair Employment Practices Committees. We are well aware of their fate. New York and New Jersey have showed the way in - with possibly more credit going to New York.

Rather than take the time for technicalities of efforts in the various states, and since we are at work in Connecticut, the District, Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Virginia, I think it better to concentrate on the facts on the Eastern Seaboard.

Somehow this brings us to New Jersey and New York again. They say that "all roads lead to Rome". Maybe we in New Jersey and New York sometime do earn the importance for our states! At least our guests don't have to say as J. A. said to an audience in South Carolina, "I haven't been here for twenty-two years, and I hope I don't have to come back for another twenty-two years!"

In New York and New Jersey there are now state laws prohibiting discrimination in employment because of race, color, or creed. We know these laws were not passed because of the beautiful love for minority groups. They were passed because social-minded citizens, intelligent citizens, and organizations not bound by the shackles of lethargy, worked hard to see that a remedy was produced by these states, for an ill that well-meaning education would take lifetimes to relieve.

Of course these laws are not going to cure anything. However, they will do until the real thing comes along. And, it is in just such as conference as this that the real thing can be concerned, labored with, and given birth to. And if you are already tired of sitting in your seats, remember what labor pains are! We want to produce, and it might mean uncomfortable thinking.

Let us analyze briefly, what happened in New York and New Jersey that produced these laws. The Urban Leagues and many other organizations made themselves felt. They exerted their

influence in the proper places and the right times.

This is not to say the victories belong to these organizations. They do not. However, what we did, helped. And we may be sure of that.

In New Jersey the N. J. Independent Citizens League, under the leadership of Mr. Frank Kingdon - radio commentator, and-time President of Rutgers University - called a conference in Trenton to discuss a bill to outlaw discrimination in employment, drafted by that body and being pressed for enactment by the Legislature of the State of New Jersey.

The scene on the local level presents a questionable picture. Here is at once the heart and the toe of the body of Fair Employment Legislation. However, at the local level rests, bitfully, the determining factor in the realization of actual fair employment practices. "More than legislation", must be the local keynote. Here we exert the best of our strength and attention.

Let us conclude the legislature picture first; and there discuss the strategies needed, possible, and/or staring us in the face as we go in and out of our offices.

The first local Fair Employment Practice Law in the United States has been passed in the country's second largest city, Chicago. In several urban cities similar laws have been considered since early spring, when Seattle, Washington seemed to be making headway. In New York City, a somewhat different type of bill, aimed to supplement the New York State Anti-Discrimination law, has been introduced by Councilman Benjamin J. Davis. No successful action has been taken to date. (It is interesting to note the first and only so far successful move to supplement the New Jersey law, has come from the New Jersey Urban League. The Industrial Relations Secretary of the New Jersey Urban League organized an Employment Problems Committee, with broad representation and strong backing by some seventeen Negro and white social agencies and civic organizations, to "not duplicate the function of the Division Against Discrimination but to supplement its services."

In St. Louis, a bill to outlaw job discrimination in that city was introduced into the Board of Alderman, by a Republican alderman - also the city's first and one of two Negroes now serving on the law making board. The bill was introduced two years ago, but was introduced again on October 26, 1945. No time for passage yet.

I might point out the variations between the various bills, that tend to make them weak or strong. However, this would involve a recital of legal jargon that would probably bore us - me too. I'm not a lawyer either, I'm a social worker and can sure tear the jargon to pieces for the benefit of our purposes. I'll therefore refer all legalistic technicalities to George DeMar. He has had formal experience and training specially as a lawyer. I have had formal experience and training at Yale Divinity School - specifically what as, is not so clear!